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ABSTRACT

In November 1991, teams of elementary school and community members from 11 communities in Massachusetts met to discuss the formation of compacts, or informal agreements describing educational goals and outlining responsibilities, to strengthen the role of families in education: this paper provides a summary of that conference. The first of five sections presents the agenda from the meeting, a directory of participants, a model compact worksheet, and a review of useful practices for involving families in education. The second part provides a composite of the teams' discussions within the framework of a model compact, including sections on goals with respect to family involvement, impediments and other issues concerning implementation, and the responsibilities and expectations of teachers, principals, the school administration, parent organizations, and community groups. Next, the third part reviews the specific goals and challenges identified by each of the 11 teams, and the fourth part presents a list of needs for information, materials, and technical assistance developed by the conference participants. The final section contains two additional items included in participants' packets: a concept paper by the Massachusetts Office of Community Education on the development of compacts and a vision statement endorsed by the school committee of each participating school system. (BCY)

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SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COMPACTS
FOR
FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

SUMMARY OF A WORKING CONFERENCE
on
November 19, 1991

MESPA Education Center
Marlboro, MA

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FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

SUMMARY OF A WORKING CONFERENCE
on
November 19, 1991

MESPA Education Center
Marlboro, MA

Co-Sponsors

Community Education Advisory Council (CEAC)
Massachusetts Department of Education, Office of Community Education
Massachusetts Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA)
Massachusetts Middle Level School Administrators' Association (MMLSAA)
Massachusetts Parent-Teacher-Student Association (MPTSA)
Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators' Association (MSSAA)

Developed by

Massachusetts Department of Education
Office of Community Education

Susan Freedman, Director
Ross Zerchykov, Community Education Specialist

Winter 1992

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Working Conference on Compacts

On November 19, 1991, school-community teams from eleven Massachusetts communities -- Attleboro, Cambridge, Duxbury, Easthampton, Fitchburg, Holyoke, Lowell, Lynn, Salem, Taunton, and Springfield -- assembled at the MESPA (Massachusetts Elementary School Principals' Association) Education Center in a Working Conference designed to launch school-community compacts for family involvement in education. Each team consisted of: the superintendent or her/his designee, a principal, a representative of the teachers' association, a leader of a parents' association or group, and representatives from community groups that are ready to be partners in the schools' efforts to involve families in the education of their children.

The participating school systems are characterized by a history of concern for and appreciation of the importance of parent and family involvement in education. They have a track record of efforts to promote more inclusive patterns of parent involvement and of outreach to under-involved, under-represented families. More importantly, these school systems are distinguished by their readiness to identify family involvement as a core function of the school and to implement school and community efforts that support a broad spectrum of opportunities for families to be involved. This readiness was demonstrated in their willingness to enter into the process of developing local compacts.

Why Compacts

A compact can be compared to a promise. In this case schools and communities promise to work together to strengthen family involvement in education. A school-community compact for family involvement describes mutually agreed upon goals for promoting family involvement and outlines the responsibilities of players within the school and the community for achieving these goals. These compacts, therefore, comprise a series of promises that school people and community representatives make to each other.

To be successful, family involvement strategies should be part of a comprehensive school and community wide approach. Comprehensive approaches require the collaboration of a number of critical players within the school and the community.

In order to bring these players together in a coordinated, comprehensive effort, a compact is needed. The compact defines the players, outlines their roles, and identifies and coordinates the essential resources.

The strength of the compact approach is that the key players are involved in the development of the compact and agree to contribute to its implementation. Compacts differ from mission statements, policy positions, and other statements on family involvement in the specificity with which they describe their goals. Compacts indicate what will be done by whom, and with what resources.

Purposes of the Working Conference

Teams from the participating communities assembled on November 19th in order to begin a dialogue that would lead to the development of locally appropriate compacts for each community. Members of the teams engaged in a series of discussions -- in team meetings and in groups with their role-alike peers from other teams -- that addressed the following questions:

- What are our goals for parent/family involvement?
- What challenges and impediments can we anticipate as we try to achieve those goals?
- What do we need to do as teachers, principals, parents and community leaders, etc., to increase family involvement in education?
- What support do we need from each other in order to do what needs to be done?

Support and Technical Assistance for the School-Community Compact Teams

The Office of Community Education of the Massachusetts Department of Education, in conjunction with co-sponsoring associations, convened the Working Conference in order to help the local teams initiate their compact development. Staff from this office are available to provide ongoing consultation.

In order to help participating school districts to implement their compacts, the Office of Community Education has assembled a pool of higher education-based resource people who are available for individualized on-site consultation.

Under this arrangement, each participating school system will be able to enjoy on-site consultation from the following resource people:

- Mary Bacigalupo, Center for Field Studies, University of Massachusetts at Lowell
- Don Davies, Center for Schools, Families, and Community, Boston University
- Sally Habana-Hafner, Center for Organizational and Community Development, University of Massachusetts at Amherst
- Susan Swap, Wheelock College
- Heather Weiss, Harvard Family Research Project

In addition, participating school systems will be placed on the preferred mailing list for resource materials from the above centers and will enjoy special access to any relevant training or speakers' events at these institutions.

Purposes and Overviews of this Summary

This "Summary" represents a beginning, not a culmination. It is designed to capture, record and feed back to the participating communities, the highlights of team discussions during the Working Conference. It is also designed to provide a "hard-copy" memory of the discussions, a memory that can guide, inform, and facilitate the local level dialogue that will be essential to the successful development and implementation of local compacts.

PART A contains primary materials from the Working Meeting including:

- The Agenda
- A list of participating communities and the name, address and phone number of the team leaders/contact people at each site. This directory is provided to facilitate networking across the sites and to enable the sites to share information and strategies as they address similar issues.
- The Model Compact Worksheet that was provided to each team to help guide its discussion.
- A "Map of Family Involvement" that describes a broad spectrum of possible family involvement activites.

PART B provides a composite of the teams' discussions of goals, challenges, and the roles and responsibilities of the key players in the compact. This composite is presented within the framework of a model compact without the expectation that any single community would want to address all of the goals identified in the composite summary. This composite is included to portray the richness of the perspectives and discussion of the teams at the November 19th Working Meeting.

PART C provides summaries of each team's community-specific list of goals and challenges. These represent the beginnings of the local dialogues that participating communities are having about compacts for family involvement in education.

PART D is a record of the key information and technical assistance needs that teams identified and shared at the Working Meeting.

PART E contains two additional items that were included in each participating team's packet: a question and answer "Concept Paper on School-Community Compacts" and a "Vision Statement" that was endorsed by the school committee of each participating school system.

If you have any questions about this Working Summary or about the initiative for School-Community Compacts, please call Susan Freedman at the Office of Community Education, (617) 770-7502.

PART A

This section contains primary materials from the November 19th Working Conference including:

- The Agenda

- A list of participating communities and the name, address and phone number of the team leaders/ contact people at each site. This directory is provided to facilitate networking across the sites and to enable the sites to share information and strategies as they address similar issues.

- The Model Compact Worksheet that was provided to each team to help guide its discussion.

- A "Map of Family Involvement" that describes a broad spectrum of possible family involvement activities.

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COMPACTS FOR FAMILY
INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

WORKING MEETING WITH LOCAL TEAMS

NOVEMBER 19, 1991 - 8:30 A.M. - 2:30 P.M.

MESPA Education Center
Marlboro, MA

AGENDA

8:30 - 9:00	REGISTRATION AND REFRESHMENTS	Lobby
9:00 - 9:30	PLENARY SESSION: GETTING STARTED	Auditorium

Welcome: Nadya Higgins, Executive Director
Massachusetts Elementary School
Principals' Association

Speaker: Rhoda Schneider
Acting Commissioner of Education

Background and Overview:
Susan Freedman, Director
Office of Community Education
Massachusetts Department of Education

9:30 - 10:00 MORNING TEAM MEETINGS

Each team reviews the "Model Compact" preamble and outline.

Each team identifies 3 goals/priority areas for family involvement in their school system. (See Part 2 of the enclosed "Model Compact Worksheet.")

Each team identifies key challenges that need to be addressed in pursuing these goals. (See Part 3 of the "Model Compact Worksheet.")

Attleboro	Auditorium
Cambridge	Auditorium
Duxbury	Auditorium
Easthampton	Auditorium
Fitchburg	Auditorium
Lowell	Auditorium
Lynn	Auditorium
Salem	Auditorium
Taunton	Auditorium
Springfield	Auditorium

10:00 - 10:20 **BRIEF SHARING SESSION**

Teams are paired and share their goals and key questions. Teams compare notes, learn from each other, and briefly assist each other in searching for answers to the key questions.

Group A: Duxbury and Easthampton — Auditorium

Facilitator: Susan Swap, Chair
Department of Professional Studies
Wheelock College

Group B: Lowell and Lynn — Auditorium

Facilitator: Don Davies, Boston University and Center on Communities, Families, Schools and Children's Learning

Group C: Cambridge and Springfield — Auditorium

Facilitator: Mary Bacigalupo, University of Massachusetts at Lowell, Center for Field Studies

Group D: Attleboro and Fitchburg — Auditorium

Facilitator: Diane Dickerson
Community Education Advisory Council

Group E: Salem and Taunton

Facilitator: Ann Rittenberg
Harvard Family Research Project

10:20-10:30 **BREAK**

10:30-11:15 **PLENARY SESSION AND PANEL**

A composite listing of the teams' goals will be presented.

Higher-education resource people sit as a panel and extemporaneously comment on the goals. Their comments will include tips on how to pursue those goals, program examples, and referrals to sources of help, including information and expertise available from them and their institutions.

Moderator: John Monfredo, Principal, Belmont Community School, Worcester
Community Education Advisory Council

Panelists: Mary Bacigalupo, Center for Field Studies
University of Massachusetts at Lowell

Don Davies, Co-Director, Center for Communities, Families, Schools and Children's Learning
Boston University

Anne Rittenberg
Harvard Family Research Project
Harvard Graduate School of Education

Susan Swap, Chair
Department of Professional Studies
Wheelock College

11:15-12:00 **SMALL ROLE-ALIKE GROUP MEETINGS**

Role-alike groups meet to address two key questions: what do "we" -- as principals, teachers, etc., -- need to do to generically to achieve the family involvement goals of our school system. What support do we need from the other role groups in order to do this?

Group A: Superintendents or their designee/s — Auditorium

Facilitator: Gerald Croteau
Community Education Advisory Council
Superintendent, Taunton Public Schools

Group B: Teachers — Auditorium

Facilitator: Patricia Campbell
Teacher, Lincoln Street School, Lynn
Region 1, Vice President, National PTA

Group C: Principals — Auditorium

Facilitator: B.J. Lates
Community Education Advisory Council
Principal, Colburn School, Lowell

Group D: Parents — Auditorium

Facilitator: Diana Gargalianos, Legislative Chair
Massachusetts Parent-Teacher-Student Association

Group E: Community Members — Library

Facilitator: Diane Dickerson
Community Education Advisory Council

Group F: Department of Education — Alcove

Facilitator: Susan Freedman
Office of Community Education

12:00- 1:00 **LUNCH**

SPEAKER Don Davies, Co-Director, Center on Communities, Families, Schools and Children's Learning

Introduction: Gerald Croteau
Community Education Advisory Council
Superintendent, Taunton Public Schools

1:00- 2:00 **AFTERNOON TEAM MEETINGS**

Local teams reconvene and begin to negotiate the reciprocal agreements that will lead to a school-community compact. Teams will also be asked to identify some concrete and immediate next steps that they will implement in their home school districts. (See Part 4 of the "Model Compact Worksheet")

Same location as for the AM Team Meeting session

Please see enclosed listing of recorders assigned to each team.

2:00 - 2:30 **FINAL PLENARY SESSION**

Teams share their next steps

Conference organizers describe plans for follow-up technical assistance for participating school systems.

Moderator: Susan Freedman
Office of Community Education

Ross Zerchykov
Office of Community Education

2:30 **ADJOURN**

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COMPACTS FOR FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

List of Participating Communities, Team Leaders and Superintendents

COMMUNITY	CONTACT PERSON/TEAM LEADER	SUPERINTENDENT
Attleboro	Ted Thibodeau Assistant Superintendent Attleboro Public Schools Rathburn Willard Drive Attleboro, MA 02703 (508) 222-0012	Joseph Rappa Superintendent Attleboro Public Schools Rathburn Willard Drive Attleboro, MA 02703
Cambridge	Patrick Murphy Assistant Superintendent Cambridge Public Schools 159 Thorndike Street Cambridge, MA 02141 (617) 349-6420	Mary Lou McGrath Superintendent Cambridge Public Schools 159 Thorndike Street Cambridge, MA 02141
Duxbury	Candice Weiler Director of Community Education Duxbury Public Schools 130 St. George Street Duxbury, MA 02332 (617) 934-7600	Donald G. Kennedy Superintendent Duxbury Public Schools 130 St. George Street Duxbury, MA 02332
Easthampton	Kathy Kussy Acting Superintendent Easthampton Public Schools 130 Main Street Easthampton, MA 01027 (413) 527-5677	Same
Fitchburg	Thomas Lamey Assistant Superintendent Fitchburg Public Schools 1047 Main Street Fitchburg, MA 01420 (508) 345-3225	Phillip Fallon Superintendent Fitchburg Public Schools 1047 Main Street Fitchburg, MA 01420
Holyoke	Felicita Elghabi Parent Information Center 325 Pine Street Holyoke, MA 01040 (413) 534-2007	George Counter Superintendent Holyoke Public Schools 96 Suffolk Street Holyoke, MA 01040

COMMUNITY	CONTACT PERSON/TEAM LEADER	SUPERINTENDENT
Lowell	Peter Stamos Project Director Lowell Public Schools 89 Appleton Street Lowell, MA 01852 (508) 937-7614	George N. Tsapatsaris Superintendent Lowell Public Schools 89 Appleton Street Lowell, MA 01852
Lynn	Peter McGinn Chapter 636 Director Lynn Public Schools 25 North Common Street Lynn, MA 01902 (617) 592-8796	James Leonard Superintendent Lynn Public Schools 42 Franklin Street Lynn, MA 01902
Salem	Perla R. Peguero Community Outreach Specialist Salem Public Schools 29 Highland Avenue Salem, MA 01970 (508) 745-9300	Edward Curtin Superintendent Salem Public Schools 29 Highland Avenue Salem, MA 01970
Springfield	Peter Levanos Director, Parent Involvement Gerena Community School 200 Birnie Avenue Springfield, MA 01102 (413) 787-7329	Peter J. Negroni Superintendent Springfield Public Schools 195 State Street Springfield, MA 01102-1410
Taunton	Donald Cleary Assistant Superintendent Taunton Public Schools 50 Williams Street Taunton, MA 02780 (508) 821-1202	Gerald Croteau Superintendent Taunton Public Schools 50 Williams Street Taunton, MA 02780

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COMPACTS FOR FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

A "MODEL" COMPACT

1. PREAMBLE

Parents and family members are their children's primary teachers. Children whose families are involved in school activities and provide reinforcement and support for learning in the home are more likely to progress academically. In recognition of these facts, the schools and the community (name of community) are committed to supporting each other in comprehensive schoolwide and community-wide efforts to expand opportunities for all families to be involved in their children's education.

2. GOALS

For the next two years, we will focus our efforts in the following three areas of family involvement. (This section will be developed in the Morning Team Meeting. You may wish to refer to the attached "Map of Family Involvement in Education.")

3. IMPEDIMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

We recognize that in order to reach the above described goals, we will need to address the following challenges.

(This section will also be developed in the Morning Team Meeting.)

4. RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE "KEY PLAYERS"

(Ideas for filling in this section will emerge from the Afternoon Team Meeting.)

A1. Teachers' initiatives

A2. Teachers' expectations for support from the other key players.

B1. Principals' initiatives

B2. Principals' expectations for support from the other key players.

C1. Central administration initiatives

C2. Central administration expectations for support from the other key players.

D1. Parent organizations' initiatives

D2. Parent organizations' expectations for support from the other key players.

E1. Community groups' initiatives

E2. Community group's expectations for support from the other key players.

A "MAP" OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Because both families and schools are concerned about the student learner, their continued cooperation and communication are vital in helping students develop the cognitive and affective skills necessary to achieve academic success. Research has shown that this cooperative effort succeeds when the school environment is welcoming to families and encouraging of their participation and input.

Experience has shown that a welcoming and encouraging environment is most effectively created through comprehensive approaches to family involvement that include practices which:

- Treat all families as an educational resource: make family involvement a core function of the school/educational program rather than an add-on, extra-curricular activity.
- Respect the cultural differences among families; structure involvement opportunities in order to accommodate the diversity of families.
- Recognize differences in family circumstances and interests and provide opportunities for individual as well as group involvement and for at-home as well as in-school activities in support of the student learning.
- Actively recruit the involvement of all families; use community settings and community organizations and leaders in an outreach effort to families that are under-involved and under-represented in school activities and in school decision-making.
- Provide opportunities for families to gain basic skills necessary to their own career development and their participation in their children's education process.
- Implement parenting education programs which support their children's educational programs and are accessible to all families.
- Promote families as partners in the educational process by regularly communicating or meeting with families to provide information on changes in curricula or programs, transitions to new educational settings, community resources, and their children's educational program.
- Make full use of the experiences, diverse perspectives, and skills of family members by encouraging their participation in school governance and decision making.
- Encompass a wide spectrum of opportunities for family involvement; provide activities for family members to be involved in education as learners, supporters, teachers, advocates, and decision-makers in the education of their children.

PART B

This section provides a composite of the teams' discussions of goals, challenges, and the roles and responsibilities of key players in the compact.

This composite is presented within the framework of a model compact without the expectation that any single community would want to address all of the goals identified in the composite summary.

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SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COMPACTS FOR FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

A "MODEL" COMPACT

PREAMBLE

Parents and family members are their children's primary teachers. Children whose families are involved in school activities and provide reinforcement and support for learning in the home are more likely to progress academically. In recognition of these facts, the schools and the community are committed to supporting each other in comprehensive schoolwide and community-wide efforts to expand opportunities for all families to be involved in their children's education.

GOALS

For the next two years, we will focus our efforts in the following areas of family involvement. (The following composite goals were developed by all the school-community teams that participated in the November 19, 1991 Working Meeting.)

1. **Create a school culture that nurtures and sustains family involvement in education.**

    - Take steps to ensure that parents, staff and community members feel comfortable in the school environment.
    - Articulate parents' and teachers' shared values for education.
    - Foster a school-community environment that promotes self-confidence and mutual respect among teachers and family members.
    - Develop an understanding that education is a shared responsibility between the home and the school.
    - Develop mutual respect between schools and families that acknowledges the contributions that both can provide to the development of children and the improvement of schooling.
    - Have information and materials for and about parents available in schools' reception areas.

- Redesign/develop training for teachers on how to facilitate parental/family involvement.

- Provide parallel training for parents and teachers on how to be more effectively involved in their children's education and in their children's school.

- Design small-scale projects that parents and teachers can do together.

2. **Expand the range of family involvement opportunities at the school and in the home.**

   - Use parents and family and community members as resources in education; respect and utilize their particular gifts and talents.

   - Assist families in providing a home learning environment that contributes to students' success.

   - Raise the level of family involvement in schools (beyond fund-raising, help on menial tasks, and lip service) to encompass roles for family members in school problem-solving and shared decision making.

   - Increase the use of parents as educational resources in the schools by involving them as volunteers, guest lecturers, and by having them share their expertise on school projects.

   - Broaden the expectations of the PTO's with respect to:

     - The role of parents in the schools and in the educational process

     - The involvement of underrepresented parents

   - Allow for various levels of involvement on the part of family members and recognize the varying amounts of time that parents may have available for involvement.

   - Clearly define and articulate the meaning of family involvement in educational decision making.

3. **Increase involvement among minority, under-serviced and under-represented families.**

   - Involve traditionally un-involved families and respect cultural differences among families.

- o Increase the "representativeness" of parent involvement groups: Membership of parent groups (PTO's, school councils, advisory committees) should more accurately reflect the constituency of the school.

- o Build a sensitivity to and create mechanisms for outreach to multi-cultural/multi-lingual parent populations.

- o Use community settings and community organizations and leaders in outreach to families that are under-involved and underrepresented in school activities and school decision making.

4. **Strengthen parents' and family members' capacity to be involved in their children's education.**

   - o Develop partnerships with families that will offer support to the schools' efforts to provide academic success.

   - o Increase pre-school and day-care opportunities as a way to get more parents involved with the school.

   - o Provide opportunities for families to gain the basic skills necessary for their own career development and for their participation in their children's education. Bring together the efforts and resources of family literacy and adult education programs, early childhood, Chapter 1, and bilingual programs to provide this support for families.

   - o Provide opportunities for families to learn together, i.e., link adult and children's learning.

   - o Provide training for parents and other family members in assisting their children's education and help families to access the school system's resources to develop this capability.

5. **Develop the support systems that sustain family involvement programs.**

   - o Identify all available human and non-human school-based resources for family involvement.

- Work with businesses/employers on assisting parents to gain "flex time" at work for the purposes of participating in activities at their children's school/s.

- Involve key community resources -- colleges, local businesses, etc. -- in all compacts for family involvement.

- Establish a system-wide resource center for family involvement. The center could provide informational materials, parent education, workshops on parenting skills, and other forms of support for families.

6. **Other goals:**

   - Improve communication among PTO's, school committees, other parent organizations, and school staff.

   - Improve communication and networking among all of the participating constituencies (e.g., school administrators, teachers, parents, students, social service agencies, law enforcement, and the community at-large).

IMPEDIMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

We recognize that in order to reach the above goals, we will need to address the following challenges. (The following list is a composite of ideas that emerged in the morning team sessions and in the sharing sessions.)

1. **Logistical and resource constraints**

   - Ability to harness and coordinate community resources.

   - Lack of flexibility, funding, and adequate conference time to improve communication between teachers and families.

   - Scarcity of resources for providing logistical support needed for all families to be involved (e.g., child care, transportation, etc.)

   - Time constraints on the part of working parents and teachers.

2. **Attitudinal constraints**

- o Promoting community awareness and appreciation of the importance of family involvement in education.
- o Conflicting perceptions of time constraints. Teachers feel overburdened and perceive that they do not have enough time to meet the demands of involving parents. Parents feel teachers do not work long enough hours to be accessible to them.
- o Lack of trust.
- o A perception that parental involvement is "off-limits" in the middle school and at the high school.
- o Resistance to change on the part of all parties.
- o Parents' negative attitudes toward schools and negative memories of unsuccessful experiences as students.
- o Encouraging families to accept a shared responsibility for education without alienating them in the process.
- o Identifying and mobilizing stakeholder groups to "own the challenge" of fostering parent involvement in education. These stakeholder groups include, but are not limited to, already active parents, business people, religious institutions, community groups, and social service agencies.

3. **Impediments to comprehensive family involvement plans**

- o Lack of literacy skills in English and in the home language among parents and family members.
- o Language barriers and lack of respect for cultural differences.
- o Ineffective horizontal and vertical communication. Horizontal: between schools and the parents/community and among peers within the school system hierarchy. Vertical: up and down the school system's chain of command.
- o Retraining and refocusing active parents to assume more responsibility for outreach to under-involved parents.
- o "Burn-out" of already active parents.

- Teachers' fear of criticism and of being overwhelmed by new and unfamiliar responsibilities.

- Low teacher motivation. Inadequate professional value and recognition placed on teachers' activities that involve families.

- Lack of clarity about expectations and responsibilities on the part of schools and families.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE "KEY PLAYERS"

The following composite lists of responsibilities and expectations under each role group are based on ideas that emerged in role-alike discussion groups and in the afternoon team meetings.

A. Teachers

1. Initiate more contacts with the parents/families of their students through:

   - more personalized contacts

   - more positive phone communications

2. Prepare materials that engage and attract under-represented, under-involved parents.

   - Prepare and distribute videotapes of in-school activities that include the children of parents who are targeted for outreach.

     Example: videos of activities such as a trip to the library; or documentaries on "A day in the life of our children."

3. Caucus and brainstorm with already active parents about strategies for involving parents.

B. Principals

1. Exercise leadership at the building level

   - Serve as spokespeople for the importance of family/parent involvement.

- Encourage PACs or other school site committees that advise, report to, or are led by principals to:
  - expand their base of representation
  - make it a priority to reach out to underrepresented parents
- Provide visibility for parent and family involvement activities at the school.

2. Create a welcoming, parent-friendly atmosphere at the school.
   - Set aside rooms or a portion of a room as a family center.
   - Provide a table with information for parents in the school's reception area.
3. Support teachers' initiatives in fostering family involvement in education.
   - Provide positive reinforcement and recognition for teachers who work with and involve the families of their students.
   - Design teachers' schedules so that they have time for family and parent involvement initiatives.
   - Provide teachers with access to clerical support for family involvement activities and initiatives.

C. Central administration initiatives

1. Promulgate a Policy Statement that reiterates the importance of family involvement in education.
2. Reallocate resources and provide the logistical support for meaningful family involvement.
   - Establish one central location for family involvement resources and materials.
   - Provide access to translation services that can bridge the language barrier for non-native English speaking families.
   - Provide teachers with convenient and adequate access to phones.

3. Support the efforts of teachers and other school staff to reach out to and involve parents.

   - o Signal that working with parents/families is an important and valued professional responsibility of teachers.
   - o Provide professional development and education for teachers about family involvement.
   - o Provide release time for teacher-initiated family outreach and involvement activities.
   - o Provide teachers and other staff with the "flex time" to meet parents after-hours in community settings.
   - o Establish a policy statement that acknowledges the teachers' role in promoting family involvement.
   - o Make it clear that teachers' are entitled to clerical help as they undertake extra efforts to reach out and involve parents.
   - o Respect teachers' professional opinions about what does and does not work in the area of parent and family involvement.

4. Take the lead in mobilizing community resources to support family involvement and support activities and programs.

   - o Contact other social service agencies in order to coordinate school and community-based family involvement/support activities.
   - o Develop a policy that can engage churches as partners in outreach to underrepresented families while allaying teachers' (and other school-community members') concerns regarding separation of church and state.
   - o Formally acknowledge that community agencies can be partners in outreach to families.
   - o Share with community agencies the positive public relations image that results from outreach to the media.

D. **Parent organizations**

- o **Advocate for a school committee policy on family involvement.**
- o **Serve as volunteers on parent-to-parent family outreach initiatives.**
- o **Encourage parents to read materials that are sent home.**
- o **Encourage and train parents to provide a home environment that supports the education of their children.**
- o **Join with other parents in outlining roles and responsibilities for parents.**

E. **Community groups**

1. Increase the involvement of minority families.
   - o **Outreach and communication: Use existing organizational vehicles to communicate messages from the school.**
   - o **Work with churches: Encourage churches to promote family involvement during national education week and at other times of the year.**
2. Foster community-wide support for schools' efforts to involve families.
   - o **Invite municipal officials to make proclamations stressing the importance of partnerships between parents and teachers.**
   - o **Request local media to provide radio spots, cable TV access, and other avenues to promote the importance of family involvement and the concept of teachers and parents as partners in the education of children.**
   - o **Encourage business people and other employers to provide parents and family members with workday release time for participating in their children's schools.**
3. Motivate families to be involved.
   - o **Provide community organization facilities as sites for meetings among representatives of**

the school and families who are the targets of outreach.

- o Coordinate community volunteers who help with transportation and childcare services that are needed to help more families to become involved.

4. Help to change attitudes of teachers and administrators toward family involvement.

   - o Encourage media to provide recognition and positive public relations for schools' initiatives that involve families.

   - o Request community service agencies to identify effective sensitivity and awareness training materials and programs for building closer links among teachers and families.

   - o Encourage community and business groups to hold appreciation events to thank teachers for their work in strengthening family involvement.

PART C

This section provides summaries of each team's community-specific list of goals and challenges regarding family involvement in education.

These represent the beginnings of the local dialogues that participating communities are having about compacts for family involvement in education.

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ATTLEBORO

Priority Goals

1. Raise level of family involvement in schools (beyond fund-raising and help with menial tasks) to encompass roles for family members in school problem-solving and shared decision making.

2. Involve traditionally un-involved families and respect cultural differences among families.

3. Establish a system-wide resource center for family involvement. The center could provide informational materials, parent education, workshops on parenting skills, and other support for families.

Challenges

1. Teachers' fear of criticism and of being overwhelmed by new and unfamiliar responsibilities.

2. Parents' negative attitudes toward the school and negative memories of unsuccessful experiences as students in schools.

3. The need for school administration to provide flexible time, funding support, and more conference time to improve communication among teachers and families.

CAMBRIDGE

Priority Goals

1. Work with businesses/employers in the existing Cambridge Partnership for Public Education on assisting parents to gain "flex time" at work for the purposes of participating in activities at their children's schools.

2. Build a sensitivity to and create mechanisms for outreach to multi-cultural/multi-lingual parent populations.

3. Increase pre-school and day-care opportunities as a way to get more parents to be involved with the school.

Challenges

1. Overcoming a resistance to change on the part of all parties.

2. Ability to harness and coordinate community resources.

3. Improving vertical and horizontal communication within the schools and between the schools and the community.

DUXBURY

Priority Goals

1. Clearly define and articulate the meaning of family involvement in educational decision making.

2. Provide opportunities for families to learn together, i.e., link adult and children's learning.

3. Foster a school-community environment that promotes self-confidence and mutual respect among teachers and family members.

Challenges

1. Lack of trust

2. Conflicting perceptions of time constraints. Teachers feel overburdened and do not think they have the time it would take to involve parents. Parents would like teachers to be available before school and in the late afternoon.

EASTHAMPTON

Priority Goals

1. Facilitate parents and community members in reaching a basic comfort level in the school environment.

2. Articulate parents' and teachers' shared values for education.

3. Use parents and family and community members as resources; respect and utilize their particular gifts and talents.

Challenges

1. Scarcity of time

2. Attitudes: a perception that parental involvement is "off-limits" in the middle and high school.

3. Scarcity of resources for providing the logistical support needed for all families to be involved (e.g., child care, transportation, etc.).

FITCHBURG

Priority Goals

1. Involve key community resources -- Fitchburg State College, local businesses -- in a compact for family involvement.

2. Identify all available human and non-human school-based resources for family involvement.

3. Improve communication among PTO's, other parent organizations, school committee, and school staff.

Challenges

1. Address language barriers to parental involvement.

2. Promote literacy among family members.

LOWELL

Priority Goals

1. Educational programs for parents and other caretakers.

2. Increase the use of parents as educational resources in the schools as volunteers, guest lecturers, and experts on special projects.

3. Increase the "representativeness" of parental involvement: Membership of parent groups (PTO's, school councils, advisory committees) should more accurately reflect the constituency of the school.

Challenges

1. Involving already active parents in outreach without overburdening them.

2. Bridging the language gap and respecting cultural differences.

LYNN

Priority Goals

1. Develop a partnership with families that will offer support to the schools' efforts to provide academic success.

2. Assist families in providing a home learning environment that contributes to students' success.

3. Develop mutual respect among schools and families that acknowledges the contributions that both can provide to the development of children and the improvement of schooling.

Challenges

1. Lack of resources specifically devoted to parent involvement.

2. Lack of professional recognition for teachers' initiatives with family involvement.

SALEM

Priority Goals

1. Create a welcoming, nurturing environment for families of students in the schools.

   a. Support teachers' ability and efforts to create a school culture that welcomes families and volunteers.

   b. Allow for various levels of involvement on the part of family members and recognize the varying amounts of time that parents may have available for involvement.

2. Provide opportunities for families to gain the basic skills necessary for their own career development and for their ability to participate in their children's education. Bring together the efforts and resources of Chapter I, early childhood, bilingual, and family literacy and adult education programs to provide this support for families.

3. Use community settings and community organizations and leaders in outreach to families that are under-involved and underrepresented in school activities and school decision making.

Challenges

1. Time constraints on the part of teachers and working parents.

2. Mobilizing resources for logistical support for family involvement, e.g., transportation, child-care, language translation, etc.

3. Changing attitudes about the importance of family involvement in order to secure the resources that are necessary to provide logistical support.

SPRINGFIELD

Priority Goals

1. Increase involvement among minority, under-serviced and under-represented families.

2. Provide training for parents and other family members in assisting their children's education and helping families to access the school system's resources to develop this capability.

3. Improve communication and networking among all of the participating constituencies (e.g., school administrators, teachers, parents, students, social service agencies, law enforcement, and the community at-large).

Challenges

1. Coordinate resources to support family involvement activities such as, child care, transportation, communication, and information accessibility.

2. Promote community awareness and appreciation of the importance of family involvement in education.

3. Identify and mobilize stakeholder groups who will "own the challenge" of fostering parent involvement in education. These stakeholder groups include, but are not limited to, already active parents, business people, religious institutions, community groups, and social service agencies.

TAUNTON

Priority Goals

1. Develop a more comfortable atmosphere for the parents in the school.

2. Broaden the expectations of the PTO's with respect to:

   - the role of parents in the schools and in the educational process
   - involvement of underrepresented parents

3. Develop an understanding that education is a shared responsibility among the home and the school.

Challenges

1. Help families to accept a shared responsibility for education without alienating them in the process.
2. Retraining and refocusing already active parents to assume more of a responsibility for outreach to under-involved parents.
3. Avoiding overtaxing already active parents.
4. Overcoming language barriers and promoting respect for cultural differences.

PART D

List of key information and technical assistance needs that the teams identified and shared at the conclusion of the Working Conference.

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COMPACTS FOR FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

List of Information and Technical Assistance Needs on the Part of School-Community Teams from the Participating School Systems

At the final session of the November 19 Working Meeting, teams from the participating communities were asked to reflect on the goals that they had set for themselves and on the challenges each anticipated facing in working toward those goals. They were also asked to list their corresponding needs for information, materials, and technical assistance.

1. **Materials and models needed**

   - Examples of parents' handbooks
   - Copies of formal agreements between schools and community service agencies for family outreach and support services
   - Needs assessment instruments to identify areas/gaps/weaknesses in existing parent and family involvement practices
   - Community resource inventories to support family involvement and outreach
   - Home-teaching/learning packets
   - Formal policies that describe parent and family involvement in school decision making

2. **Assistance needed to:**

   - Establish parent/family resource centers: district-wide and school building based.
   - Provide group process and team-building skills for the school-community compact teams:
     - linking with the constituencies represented on the team
     - increasing community-wide ownership in the goals for family involvement
   - Develop systemwide plans for parent and family involvement.
   - Allay teachers' and administrators' misgivings about family/parent involvement.
   - Develop workshops for teachers on how to work with parents and families more effectively.
   - Expand sensitivity to cultural differences.

- Access local media.
- Combine/coordinate the work of different parent advisory committees.
- Work with the business community to increase opportunities for family involvement.
- Develop "contracts" between the school and the home concerning reciprocal rights and responsibilities regarding education.

PART E

This section contains two additional items that were included in each participating teams packet.

- o A question and answer "Concept paper on School-Community Compacts"
- o A "Vision Statement" that was endorsed by the school committee of each participating school system.

CONCEPT PAPER ON:

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COMPACTS FOR FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Office of Community Education
Massachusetts Department of Education

What is a compact?

The dictionary defines a "compact" as a formal agreement between two or more parties. A Family Involvement Compact describes mutually agreed upon goals for promoting greater family involvement in their children's schooling and outlines the responsibilities for each party in achieving these goals.

How does a Family Involvement Compact differ from other agreements to promote family involvement?

Family Involvement Compacts differ from other statements on family involvement in the specificity with which they describe the goals for family involvement and indicate **what** will be done by **whom** and with what **resources.**

How do Family Involvement Compacts work?

Family involvement Compacts provide the thread that binds together the mutual support that is required among school staff, parents, and community representatives to ensure **comprehensive** approaches to family involvement. The constituencies that are brought together by the compact include:

- the superintendent
- a representative of the building principals
- a representative of the teachers' association
- a representative of parent organizations
- a representative of the community, which can include human service agencies, business, clergy, and others
- local news media

The compact brings together all of the parties who are critical to family involvement to ask:

- What do we as teachers, principals, parents and community leaders, etc., need to do to increase family involvement in education for children in our schools?

- What support do we need from the other parties to the compact to achieve these goals?

In answering these questions, these key players develop a series of multi-lateral agreements that describe goals, specific responsibilities, and the support that can be expected from each other.

The process of developing these agreements is led by a local planning committee with representatives of the key constituencies and includes widespread consultation and community meetings with each of the constituencies.

Why are Family Involvement Compacts necessary?

Family involvement in education will become a reality in schools and communities only when all of the parties involved understand and agree on the need to work together. Teachers, principals, superintendents, other school staff and parent and community organization leaders will need to share responsibility to make family involvement a central, not peripheral, function of the schools.

Support from and for teachers:

The quality and extent of the interaction between the teacher and the family set the tone and the foundation for all subsequent family involvement activities. As teachers are expected to take on new roles and responsibilities, they have a right to expect that:

- School administrators will provide the necessary logistical support that enhance communication with families (phonelines, meeting space, clerical support).

- Training will be provided on working effectively with families and with community agencies.

- New roles and responsibilities are recognized, factored into workload expectations, and compensated through stipends or release from other duties.

Support from and for principals and other school administrators

Teachers' expectations have implications for principals and other school administrators. In providing support for teachers' roles in promoting family involvement, school administrators should expect support from the superintendent and central office administrators.

This support can take several forms:

- leadership that emphasizes the importance of parents and family members as partners in their children's education;

- translation services, childcare, clerical and communication services that, through economies-of-scale, can best be provided centrally; and

- validation that outreach to families and support of teachers' family involvement efforts are an important and legitimate expenditure of administrative time.

Superintendents

Superintendents who adopt Family Involvement Compacts should expect that their allocation of resources and logistical support are understood and supported by the school committee and the community at large.

Support from the community

The superintendent and others in the school system should be able to count on support from the community to implement a comprehensive family involvement policy.

Examples:

- Organized parent organizations can assist the schools in outreach to under-involved families through peer-to-peer contacts. They can also recruit volunteers who assist teachers with non-teaching duties to allow them more time to involve and interact with the families of their students.

- Business people can provide limited and reasonable access to the worksite for family outreach and parent education activities. They can also provide employees with a modest amount of release time so that more working family members can attend school events during the workday.

- Human service agencies, health care centers, libraries, religious institutions, and other community resources can make available informational materials about the schools, about effective parenting, and about the value of schooling. They also can collaborate with schools on outreach programs to families who are underrepresented at the schools.

What signals are sent by the formation of a Family Involvement Compact?

1. The school system is serious and sincere in its commitment to family involvement.

2. Family involvement is an ongoing policy of the school system and not a special, short-term project.

3. The efforts of school administrators and teachers to promote family involvement are recognized as an important and valued exercise of professional responsibility.

5. No one group can be expected to implement family involvement programs on their own. There are many players who are key to making it happen and who need to collaborate to be successful.

4. The schools cannot make family involvement a reality on their own. They should and can expect the support and help of the community in nurturing family involvement in education.

VISION STATEMENT:

PROMOTING FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Prepared in the form of a resolution to be endorsed by the school committees of the participating school systems

WHEREAS:

(a) Parents and family members are their children's primary teachers;

(b) Children whose families are involved in school activities and provide reinforcement and support for learning in the home are more likely to progress academically and complete high school;

(c) School systems that mobilize the involvement of more of the families of their students have more successful students and more instructionally effective schools;

(d) Strong schools make for healthy communities and the community at-large has a responsibility for strengthening the schools through increased involvement of the families of their students;

(e) Traditional avenues for parental involvement do not take into account changes in the American family structure such as the increase in single and two working-parent families and the reality that for many children the role of parent is filled by grandparents, aunts, and uncles, foster parents, and other family members;

(f) Without pro-active outreach for involving all families in education, academically at-risk children, who would most benefit from the increased involvement of their families, are least likely to enjoy it;

(g) And, whereas effective outreach to all families requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach to family involvement.

BE it, therefore, RESOLVED that:

(1) Families are recognized as full partners in the education of their children and are seen as an educational resource.

(2) Family involvement is a central, not peripheral, function of the school and a shared and basic responsibility of the schools and the community, not an add-on task for one segment of the school community.

(3) The entire school community, from the central office on down to support staff, should support and encourage family involvement programs and practices, at both the school and the district level, that:

(a) respect the cultural differences among families and structure involvement opportunities that accommodate the diversity of families;

(b) recognize differences in family circumstances and interests and provide opportunities for family members to be involved in individual and at-home activities as well as group activities such as membership on parent advisory committees and other in-school activities that support children's learning;

(c) encompass a wide spectrum of opportunities for family involvement and provide activities for family members to learn more about the school and their children's education, support school activities and their children's learning, and participate in decisions about school policies and programs; and

(d) appreciate the different and unique perspectives that all families can bring to discussions and decisions about school programs and policies.

(4) Schools collaborate with other community organizations and institutions to:

(a) actively involve community agencies and organizations such as human service agencies, civic and neighborhood associations, businesses, clergy, and local newsmedia, in outreach efforts to families that are under-involved and under-represented in school activities and in school decision making;

(b) provide opportunities for families to gain basic skills necessary to their own career development and their participation in their children's educational process; and

(c) implement parenting education programs which support family members' ability to be involved in their children's educational programs and are accessible to all families.

AND be it, furthermore, RESOLVED that, in order to attain the above objectives, the school system shall participate in a process leading to the formation of a **School-Community Compact for Family Involvement** with the understanding that this compact will:

(5) Define the family involvement goals for the school system;

(6) Identify and be developed by the key constituencies in the school, among the parent organizations, and in the community, whose active involvement is necessary to meet those goals;

(7) Describe the responsibilities of each of those constituencies; and

(8) Specify the support that constituencies can expect from each other in order to fulfill those responsibilities.